

Innovative local manufacturer brings jobs to Rio Arriba County

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Using the experience gained as a nuclear physicist supporting the United States' past underground nuclear test program, long-time northern New Mexico resident and former Los Alamos National Laboratory employee Carl Keller invented the first flexible liner system in 1989 and has owned and overseen FLUTe, the only flexible liner manufacturer in the world, since 1996. Keller holds 19 domestic and 13 foreign patents, with additional ones pending, and is looking for local talent to join his growing team. FLUTe's main plant and offices are located in Alcalde, just outside Velarde, New Mexico, with additional facilities in Albuquerque and Warminster, Pennsylvania.

To address the growing need for its products, FLUTe moved from its previous location in Cuyamungue to an old mica milling operation in Alcalde in 2013 and this year will

bring a crucial manufacturing capability in-house with the help of money received from the Venture Acceleration Fund (VAF). The VAF was created by Los Alamos National Security, LLC, the company managing Los Alamos National Laboratory, in 2006 and is administered through the Regional Development Corporation's Los Alamos Connect program.

"Thanks to the Venture Acceleration Fund," Keller said, "we are able to purchase critical equipment and to manufacture parts here in northern New Mexico that we previously had to buy from California."

Making the parts in Alcalde will allow the company to cut down on turnaround times and shipping costs, have complete quality control over the materials and add local jobs.

"A technical background or general interest in mechanical systems would be great," Keller explained, "but they are not essential. What FLUTe, which stands for Flexible Liner Underground Technologies, LLC, is really looking for is good people. Not counting possible administrative openings, we expect to add at least two new positions annually for the next few years and more later. We sometimes even hire outstanding candidates when we don't have a specific opening for them."

The flexible liners that FLUTe produces are used in a variety of underground applications, including mapping groundwater contamination, sealing boreholes against cross-contamination and assessing the state of municipal water supplies and mining sites.

"Many kinds of harmful chemicals are found beneath the surface of the ground and move into subsurface geologic formations, where they can contaminate aquifers, including those used for drinking water," Keller noted. "Our flexible liners help address the problem by finding the contamination and determining its nature and extent. Our products have been used by regulatory agencies, research institutions and large corporations like Boeing, Exxon Mobile and General Electric in countries ranging from Canada to South Africa, and we have distributors in Australia and Brazil."

For additional information on the Venture Acceleration Fund, go to Los Alamos Connect's [VAF](#) web page and also see the [2014 VAF winner announcement](#).

To learn more about Keller's manufacturing enterprise, visit the [FLUTe](#) website. To check FLUTe's listed job openings, consult the company's [Employment Opportunities](#) web page.

Los Alamos National Laboratory

www.lanl.gov

(505) 667-7000

Los Alamos, NM

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